

# INTERCONTINENTAL TERMINALS COMPANY TANK FIRE AND RESPONSE DEER PARK, TEXAS



## **BACKGROUND:**

- On March 17, 2019, Intercontinental Terminals Company LLC (ITC) discovered one tank, containing naphtha, on fire and reported the incident to the National Response Center.
- A total of fifteen (15) tanks were within the tank battery involved in the fire. These tanks contained gasoline, oil, xylenes, Pygas, and Toluene.
- On March 22, 2019, the secondary containment for the impacted tank battery failed, resulting in a spill of thousands of barrels of product and firefighting water/foam into Tucker Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel.
- A shelter-in-place was issued for the residents and businesses of Deer Park during the initial fire, as well as the subsequent fire. The fires resulted in the collapse, burning, or damage of all fifteen (15) tanks.
- On March 23, 2019, in consultation with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), EPA issued ITC an Administrative Order requiring the facility to comply with a broad scope of work, prescribing such efforts as securing the facility to prevent further discharge of chemicals, conducting spill response, removal of the discharged chemicals and efforts to prevent further hazardous air releases.
- On April 17, 2019, at the request of ITC, with concurrence from TCEQ, and pursuant to EPA's emergency response authorities, EPA authorized the treatment and discharge of the incident-related wastewater from one specific tank through the on-site wastewater treatment system.
- ITC completed the treatment and discharge of the initial volume of wastewater in Tank 80-34, which was authorized by the April 17, 2019, EPA Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) Authorization to Discharge. The EPA FOSC Authorization to Discharge was completed, and further use of their wastewater treatment plant and discharges fall under their normal Texas Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.
- ITC removed all material from the impacted tanks until they are able to remove until each tank is deconstructed. and completed the deconstruction of the five (5) highest risk tanks with remaining sludge/product that had the potential for benzene vapor emissions..

## **KEY POINTS:**

- After collaboration with TCEQ and assessing the threat of further off-site impact from this incident, EPA transitioned the Site from emergency response with EPA as the lead federal agency to long term cleanup with TCEQ oversight on June 17, 2019.
- Tank 80-8 is the final tank to be deconstructed and is estimated by the potentially responsible party (PRP) to be completed in August 2019.
- All water recovery operations were completed before June 16, 2019, and as of May 20, 2019, the Unified Command (UC) had signed off all shoreline segments (86.08 miles of shoreline) except Tucker Bayou (B14b), which will be addressed by long term remediation with planned oversight by TCEQ.
- As of May 31, 2019, total volume of incident related impact liquids was 919,904 bbl. This includes volumes in barges and tanks and stormwater from the 2<sup>nd</sup> 80's tank farm. Approximately 97% of the shoreline has been cleaned-up. Air monitoring continues and will be revisited once tanks are emptied.

- Congressional Interest: High media and Congressional interest. EPA participated in meetings with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (District 18) and Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia (District 29), briefed Congressman Al Green (District 9) at his request and had multiple briefings for Congressman Brian Babin (District 36). EPA also received an inquiry from Congressman Crenshaw (District 2).

## **TALKING POINTS:**

- EPA, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Harris County Pollution Control Services and Intercontinental Terminals Company worked together in a Unified Command for this incident.
- Air monitoring performed by Unified Command members was conducted 24-hours a day to provide necessary data to local officials to assist in making protective action decisions for their communities, as well as ensuring emergency responders were adequately protected.
- EPA deployed its aircraft (Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology, ASPECT), which was able to fly above the ITC plant during and after the fire to determine if any immediate air quality threats to those downwind of the plant. In addition to the chemical detection mission, The aircraft remained on site to collect high-resolution aerial digital photography daily for a total of 34 days, completing 27 flights over 50 hours throughout the area. It was also able to map oil and oil sheen that was leaking from containment booms in the ship channel waterway.
- EPA's mobile laboratory (Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer, TAGA), capable of real-time analytical sampling and monitoring was deployed to detect potential ambient air threats to the communities surrounding and downwind from the ITC facility. As of May 13, 2019, it has covered over 7,300 miles collecting more than 3,800,000 data points in the Houston area. Additionally, EPA conducted handheld air monitoring and collected over 3,178 readings.
- On March 21, 2019, the day after the fire was initially extinguished, EPA began sampling surface water for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), including perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), in both Tucker Bayou and Buffalo Bayou.
- Through an Administrative Order issued on March 23, 2019, EPA required ITC to conduct surface water sampling for contaminants, including PFAS. The order also requires ITC to remove spilled material and take actions to prevent it from migrating farther downstream.
- EPA developed and implemented a robust surface water sampling plan that includes sampling for PFAS chemicals. EPA will rely on all available tools and methods to provide as much information to the public as possible about PFAS levels in local waterways.
- Neither EPA nor TCEQ have established action levels for PFOA and PFOS in surface water.
- In addition to PFAS, EPA collected and analyzed surface water samples for volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, chemical oxygen demand, and oil & grease.
- ITC estimates the complete tank deconstruction in August 2019 and complete disposal of incident related wastes in February 2020, if no new hurdles arise.
- ITC will provide a final report to EPA upon completion.
- Over the course of the response effort and including personnel from EPA, U.S. Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and Center for Disease Control, TCEQ, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Harris County, Local Emergency Management, ITC, and contractors, almost 2,000 personnel were on-site as part of the response effort (this list is not all inclusive).
- EPA used the Story Map Resource, which was created by EPA, in coordination with the TCEQ to provide information to the public. The ITC Story Map shows sampling data by location,

allowing the public to see what is being measured in their community. The Story Map Resource can be found within the Site Response website.

- This incident spill volume and response effort is in the top 3 of the largest CERCLA Sites under EPA jurisdiction in history.

**Congressional Interest** – Numerous congressional members around the Houston area have expressed interest in this issue and received EPA statements and updates throughout the event. Congressman Babin and Weber are along the corridor of refineries, and Congresswoman Fletcher made inquiries as the event was happening.